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USDA FOR OSEC STUMP/PENN/LAMBERT/CAINE,
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BRUSSELS FOR USAID/PLERNER AND APHIS/PFERNANDEZ
PARIS FOR GCARNER
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VIENNA PASS APHIS
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FROM THE U.S. MISSION TO THE UN AGENCIES IN ROME

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KFLU EAGR FAID CASC SENV SOCI TBIO FAO WHO
SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA: WEEKLY UPDATE ON FAO ACTIVITIES
#6 FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 31, 2006

REF: (A) 05 ROME 3949; (B) 05 ROME 3320; (C) 05 ROME 2979;

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(J) 06 UN ROME 0464; (K) 06 UN ROME 0626; (L) UN ROME 0678;
(M) 06 UN ROME 0766; (N) 06 UN ROME 0860

11. Summary: On March 28, USMISSION UN ROME met with FAO Animal Production and Health (AGA) and Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation (TCE) Divisions staff to discuss Azerbaijan; global Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) expert needs; personal protective equipment (PPE) needs in the West Bank and Gaza; and Emergency Center for Trans-boundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) Socio-economic and Policy Working Group activities. FAO requested that:

-- A determination of needs in Azerbaijan be postponed until after the April 12-13 FAO/OIE regional conference in Ankara;
-- A recruitment specialist be posted to Rome for a 12-month detail to field multinational requests for rapid assessment and rapid response team experts, while an IT specialist be posted for a 3-month detail to help develop and merge the AI global early warning system databases with other global databases, and a crisis management center manager be detailed for a physical review and determination of operations center requirements;

-- PPEs are needed in the West Bank while a culling expert will travel to Gaza after the Israeli elections this week; and

-- the ECTAD Socio-economic and Policy Working Group is currently collaborating with WFP on sharing GIS data to improve knowledge of poultry keeping systems and poultry keepers. End Summary

Azerbaijan Needs to be Determined After Ankara

12. On Azerbaijan:

-- FAO stated how difficult it has been to get the Azeris to admit they have an HPAI problem. FAO reiterated concerns over the major lack of transparency on all fronts. [Note: AGA staff noted their frustration with Uzbek authorities as well and the inability to obtain good quality information. A regional Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) meeting being held in Tashkent the week of March 24 should be able to garner more collaboration on this front as well. End Note]

-- FAO also informed that the Tehran-based consultant who was scheduled to begin a 5-6-month-long TDY on March 28th has been facing difficulties in obtaining clearances for Azerbaijan. FAO hopes the issue will be cleared up soon after celebrations for the Iranian New Year have ended.

-- The Budapest-based FAO epidemiologist, Andrei Rostalnyy, returned to Baku on March 30th to continue with assessments. USMISSION UN ROME passed Rostalnyy's contact details to USAID/Baku, which invited him to attend the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) meeting held on March 31. DTra is looking to strengthen disease surveillance in Azerbaijan and the meeting has been open to all partners, including the World Bank.

-- When asked about needs in-country, FAO indicated there is much need for building up laboratory capacity. Azerbaijan would greatly benefit in having an expert dedicate between 4-5 weeks of assistance to help get laboratory procedures underway.

-- TCE reported on a March 28 meeting with representatives from the Azeri Mission in Rome. The Azeri Mission was not fully certain of its government's plan but clearly stated the Government of Azerbaijan (GoA) is asking for help.

Apparently, the Azeri representatives had heard that the GoA has circulated to donors in Baku a "shopping list" of items it believes it requires to combat HPAI. The Mission requested that FAO help develop a project proposal based on FAO's initial assessment of needs. Relating to the proposal, both AGA and TCE staff agreed it was too early to tell exactly what the country needs, but indicated a full package of assistance, including epidemiologists, virologists, lab technicians, equipment, and lab upgrades, would likely be required. Assessments are still ongoing as are discussions with authorities on what they will be able to accept and how the GoA intends to use funds. (Note: TCE briefly elaborated on the difficulty it already faced with the GoA, when, under its regional Budapest-based Technical Cooperation Program (TCP), FAO provided emergency funds, which the GoA wanted to use to purchase non-expendable goods. End Note). FAO suggested the U.S. look to the FAO/OIE Regional Meeting being held in Ankara April 12-13 for a clearer indication of needs, including experts, and when to send them. FAO hopes that Azerbaijan's participation in this meeting will yield more collaboration and more transparency.

Global and Rome-based Expertise

¶3. When asked to provide more details on what FAO needs in terms of experts worldwide, FAO stated that:

A) For the rapid assessment and rapid response teams, an animal health recruitment specialist should be posted to Rome as soon as possible for a minimum 12-month assignment to help the Dutch consultant already on board to field country requests, which have been characterized as "coming out the woodwork." With this help FAO can better decide on global needs. USMISSION UN ROME asked if FAO could provide a matrix laying out expert needs for a more global view. AGA indicated it had developed a similar table on 56 countries and would work to further develop it into a matrix of expert needs. In general, FAO noted a global need for laboratory technicians/diagnostician;

B) A programmer/developer specialist for a 3-month assignment to help develop the Global Early Warning and Response System for Avian Influenza (GLEWS) database, marrying it with other existing databases-bases, such as FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS); and

C) A Crisis Management Center manager to help determine infrastructure needs at post in an effort to facilitate the physical construction of the proposed operations center. (Note: in preparation for a USDA/APHIS delegation's visit to Rome April 3-6 to discuss staffing and operations center needs, USMISSION UN ROME facilitated a teleconference between FAO and USDA/Washington on March 31, during which. FAO reiterated points A-C above.)

¶4. These three positions would support the Crisis Management Center, which was described in the March 17 FAO/OIE draft paper. Before filling these positions, particularly the manager of the Crisis Management Center, FAO hopes to have another consultation with the donors to whom that paper was circulated (U.S., EU, Netherlands, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland). FAO emphasized the need for continued multilateral coordination on in support of the Crisis Management Center.

¶5. TCE also noted that it is recruiting seven experts to be based out of Rome for use in rapid response teams: four epidemiologists, a laboratory diagnostician, a social economist (already on board), and a communications specialist. On March 30, a TCE staff member and an FAO IT specialist traveled to Geneva to view the WHO situation room and to Bern to meet with Swiss authorities to discuss potential funding opportunities.

PPE and Other Needs in the West Bank and Gaza

¶6. TCE stated that, worldwide, PPEs are under production, and that it had received an urgent request from the West Bank for PPEs. A Tunis-based veterinary arrived on March 29 to meet with the ex Israeli CVO working on AI activities. In addition, FAO has held discussions with authorities on compensation issues and sent draft guidelines in preparation for a national plan. FAO is planning to send a consultant to Gaza after the Israeli elections to further assist in culling efforts as well.

Socio-Economic Aspects of AI

17. USMISSION UN ROME also met with the Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD) Socio-economic and Policy Working Group for a briefing. FAO formed this multidisciplinary working group to promote a better understanding of the human dimension of the development challenges posed by AI. The group is composed of economists, social anthropologists, epidemiologists, livestock production experts and policy specialists and undertakes a wide range of activities, including: estimating the economic costs, impacts and control of HPAI; modeling disease dynamics; identifying social and gender aspects of disease impact and control on livelihoods and food security; and developing rapid reconnaissance tools for socio-economic assessments and guidelines for policy support in areas such as compensation. The group is currently collaborating with other UN agencies, including WFP on sharing GIS data to improve knowledge of poultry keeping systems and poultry keepers, and NGOs and IFAD on socio-economic assessments, livelihoods impact analysis and humanitarian preparedness preparation.

18. Of note, the group conducted a coping strategies case study for Vietnam in the aftermath of the December 2003 outbreak. In conjunction with the Vietnam General Statistics Offices (GSO), 808 farms (industrial, commercial, small commercial and backyard) were interviewed. Immediately after the AI outbreak, a decrease of food intake was found to be common among all categories, higher in larger farms but probably more dramatic in smaller farms. Other important findings included that culling was mostly concentrated on larger farms (72 percent commercial and 85 percent industrial); and that the capacity of farms to secure new loans to recover production was directly proportional to the farm size and corresponded to about half of the pre AI outbreak period. Interestingly, studies also found that farmers who could afford it were apt to intensify or completely switch to other agricultural enterprises like pig raising.

19. USMISSION UN ROME will continue to disseminate widely FAO activities to combat and control Avian Influenza.

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